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Senators Delay Action on Covert Nicaragua Aid

By ELLEN HUME,
Times Staff Writer

WASHINGTON—The Senate Intelligence Committee on Friday delayed final action on a Reagan Administration request for \$19 million in covert aid to anti-Sandinista guerrillas in Nicaragua for the 1984 fiscal year until it hears a new Administration justification of the program.

However, it voted to allow covert funding to continue through Sept. 30.

The expression of concern by the Republican-led Senate committee about covert aid was unusual because the panel normally operates in secret and in conjunction with presidential policy. The action, however, fell short of the rebuke delivered to the President on Tuesday by the House Intelligence Committee. The Democratic-led House panel voted to cut off all current funding for anti-Sandinista covert activities and instead authorized \$80 million in military aid to friendly Central American governments.

Friday's vote tabulation was not announced, but Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan (D-N.Y.), when asked, said there were only one or two dissenting votes.

Sen. Barry Goldwater (R-Ariz.), Senate Intelligence Committee chairman, said the new justification from the White House will cover "the whole ball of wax. What are we doing in Nicaragua? Are we trying to take it over? Are we trying to support this group or that group? Are we trying to prevent the flow of weapons through Nicaragua into other Central American countries? Those are the questions I think the President will address himself to, in a concise way."

Goldwater told a press conference after the vote that he had informed the President by telephone Thursday of the language in the measure, a compromise between advocates of an immediate cutoff of covert aid and those who support continued funding.

"He found no quarrel with it," Goldwater said. "I'll be honest. I think he would have been happier if we'd just left the whole thing alone. But that was not the will or the thinking of the committee."

"Actually what we've done is fund the Nicaraguan-Cuban covert paramilitary action as currently defined through Sept. 30, 1983 (the end of the 1983 fiscal year), and authorized an additional \$19 million from the reserve for contingency, to fund a new, redefined program, on receipt of a new presidential finding," Goldwater said.

The chairman said the President had agreed to present the new "finding"—official jargon for a new justification for the covert program—within about a month.

1983 Cutoff Chances Dim

The President's finding will have to be approved by a majority of the Senate Intelligence Committee before the 1984 funds are released, Moynihan, the committee's vice chairman, said. The congressional intelligence committees do not have the power to veto a President's covert military program but they can stymie it by holding up funding.

By refusing to join the House committee in calling for an immediate end to the covert activities, the Senate committee virtually scuttled

any chance that a 1983 cutoff sponsored by House Intelligence Committee Chairman Edward P. Boland (D-Mass.) and House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Clement J. Zablocki (D-Wis.) will be passed by both houses of Congress. Senate Majority Leader Howard H. Baker Jr. (R-Tenn.) predicted Friday that the Boland-Zablocki measure would not be approved by the full Senate even if it makes its way through the full House.

Even so, the concerns raised by both congressional intelligence committees are expected to have a chilling effect on the Administration's covert military program in Nicaragua, according to members of Congress and other experts.

"I think inevitably, expressions of concern by the committees will chill the ardor of the CIA program," said Kenneth Bass, a private attorney who was the Justice Department's counsel for intelligence policy during the Carter Administration. "They're a governmental bureaucracy responsive to a certain extent to expressions of congressional concern. It affects the way they approach things."

Reagan Reappraisal Seen

Rep. Wyche Fowler Jr. (D-Ga.), a member of the House Intelligence Committee, said Tuesday that he thought "the strong statement" in the House bill would cause the Administration to reevaluate its policies. However, the next day Reagan denounced the House committee vote as irresponsible and defended the covert action as aid to "freedom fighters" battling an oppressive leftist government in Nicaragua.

Goldwater said the Senate panel did not vote Friday on a proposal from Sen. David Durenberger (R-Minn.) to flatly cut off the aid, or on a proposal to approve the covert action as requested by the President.

At the United Nations, members of the Security Council agreed to open debate Monday on Nicaragua's complaint that it is under attack from U.S.-backed guerrillas, news agencies reported.

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